

9. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 8 in which the step of providing buffer material includes the steps of:

operatively connecting an applicator to the robot adjacent the recess-forming tool;
connecting a source of buffer material in fluid communication with the applicator;

and

operating a robot to simultaneously move the forming tool into and along the peripheral mating edge of the first trim part while moving the applicator in spaced generally parallel relationship with the peripheral mating edge and in trailing relationship to the recess-forming tool, the trailing applicator providing buffer material in the recess to overfill the recess and provide a bead of buffer material on the peripheral mating edge of the first trim part.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 1 including the additional step of mounting the second trim part in an opening in the first trim part, the mating edges being an outer peripheral edge of the second trim part and an inner edge of the first trim part surrounding and defining the opening in the first trim part, the additional step following the step of allowing the buffer material to mechanically connect to the first trim part.

REMARKS

Claims 1, 7, 8, 9 and 11 have been amended to recite that the invention is directed at the use of first and second trim parts having mating peripheral edges configured to lie adjacent one another. Support can be found at page 1, lines 23-24, page 3, line 30 to page 4, line 2, page 7 lines 20-25 and FIGS 1, 1A, 2, 3, 3A, and 4-6. No new matter has been entered.

Applicant's invention is directed at a method of reducing noise in automotive trim panels caused by the relative movement of one peripheral edge of one component against

an edge of an adjacent component. The method comprises forming a recess in one peripheral mating edge or surface, overfilling that recess with buffer material and allowing the buffer material to solidify, thus providing a mechanical bond to the peripheral edge having the recess. This is followed by supporting the first and second trim parts adjacent one another with the trim part contacting the bead of buffer material such that the bead is **compressed** between the first and second trim parts at their peripheral edge.

In contrast, the cited art Reid, et al. (United States Patent No. 5,810,406) is directed at quite a different objective and does not teach or suggest the placement of a buffer material at the peripheral edge of a trim part nor the use of compression of the bead between the first and second trim parts.

Reid claims a molding such as might be mounted on the outside of a vehicle (see FIG. 1). The molding is comprised of two layers, a first having a plurality of lugs and recesses and a second extruded in association with the first and including a surface have a plurality of corresponding lugs and recesses, and means for attaching said molding to a substrate. It is clear that Reid is not directed at reducing relative movement and resultant noise by adding a buffer bead in a recess between interior trim components (emphasis added) at their peripheral edge. Further, as the Examiner points out in the Office Action, dated July 17, 2002 (page 2, item 2) "the admitted prior art does not teach forming a recess having an undercut portion in the mating surface of the first trim part after providing the first trim part; providing buffer material in the recess so as to provide a bead of buffer material on the mating surface; and allowing the bead to mechanically connect to the first trim part".

Applicant understands fully that the Examiner was of the opinion that Reid et al teach extruding a first layer of an automotive trim part and feeding the first layer into a shaping die such that the first layer has a recess with an undercut portion therein and

using a mechanical bond as opposed to adhesive tape to mate two materials to form an automotive trim. Office Action of July 17, 2002 at page 3.

Applicant does not dispute the fact that tongue and groove type attachment, which is illustrated in Reid, may be known and applied in various applications to mechanically connect different types of structure. Interestingly enough, the fact is that Reid does not even stand for this proposition, since Reid adds the requirement that his lugs and recesses must also engage and preferably form an adhesive bond. See, col. 3, l. 49-54.

In any event, it is important to also emphasize that as recited in the amended claims, Applicant relies upon the use of **compression between the first and second trim parts such that the bead is compressed** to reduce noises produced by contact and relative motion. Reid et al does not teach or suggest anything close to this limitation of the claims. In fact, Reid et al, if anything, illustrates that his lugs and recesses are in tension, to the extent that the trim strip is illustrated as hanging on the outside of the vehicle.

Included herein is a Marked Copy of the Amended Claims Showing Changes.

It is respectfully submitted therefore, that the rejection of claim 1 under U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious, should be withdrawn upon reconsideration. Claims 3-11 depend directly, or indirectly, from independent claim 1 and must be construed to include all the limitations of claim 1. Accordingly, claims 3-11 are believed allowable to their own additional limitations. It is respectfully submitted therefore, that the rejection of claims 3-11 under U.S.C. 35 103 as being unpatentable should also be withdrawn upon reconsideration.

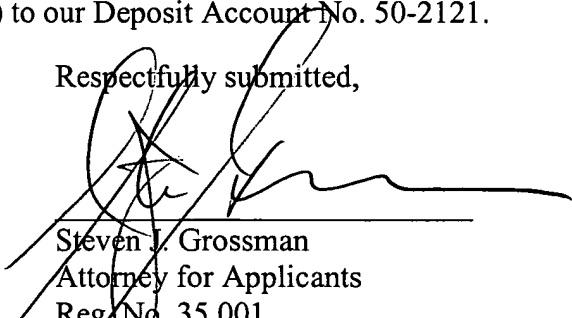
In consideration of the amendments to the claims and the remarks hereinabove, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the objections and rejections raised by the Office Action, mailed July 17, 2002 have been overcome by this response. Accordingly, all claims currently pending in the application are believed to be in condition for

allowance. Allowance at an early date is respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner deems personal contact is necessary, please contact the undersigned attorney at (603) 668-6560.

In the event there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge them (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner of Patents, BOX RCE, Washington, DC 20231 on October 17, 2002, at Manchester, New Hampshire.

By Carol McAllister

MARKED COPY OF THE AMENDED CLAIMS SHOWING CHANGES

1. (Four Times Amended) A method for mounting interior vehicle trim parts to reduce noise in which a first trim part is supported adjacent a second trim part and in which a bead of buffer material is provided between the first and second trim parts to reduce noises produced by contact and relative motion between the first and second trim parts, the method including the steps of:

providing the first and second trim parts, the first trim part having a peripheral mating edge [surface] configured to lie adjacent [alongside] a peripheral mating edge [surface] of the second part when the first and second trim parts are supported adjacent one another;

forming a recess having an undercut portion in the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part after providing the first trim part;

providing buffer material in the recess and overfilling said recess so as to provide a bead of buffer material on the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part;

allowing the bead to mechanically connect to the first trim part by hardening of the buffer material within the recess; and

supporting the first and second trim parts adjacent one another with the second trim part contacting the bead of buffer material such that the bead is compressed between the first and second trim parts.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 1 in which the step of providing buffer material includes the steps of:

providing a robot operatively connected to an applicator;

connecting a source of buffer material to the applicator, the buffer material being in fluid communication with the applicator; and

operating the robot to move the applicator in spaced generally parallel relationship with the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part while projecting buffer material into the recess and onto the peripheral mating edge [surface].

8. (Amended) The method of claim 1 in which the step of forming a recess includes the steps of:

providing a robot operatively connected to a recess-forming tool; and

operating the robot to move the forming tool into and along the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part.

9. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 8 in which the step of providing buffer material includes the steps of:

operatively connecting an applicator to the robot adjacent the recess-forming tool;

connecting a source of buffer material in fluid communication with the applicator;

and

operating a robot to simultaneously move the forming tool into and along the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part while moving the applicator in spaced generally parallel relationship with the peripheral mating edge [surface] and in trailing relationship to the recess-forming tool, the trailing applicator providing buffer material in the recess to overfill the recess and provide a bead of buffer material on the peripheral mating edge [surface] of the first trim part.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 1 including the additional step of mounting the second trim part in an opening in the first trim part, the mating edges [surfaces] being an outer peripheral edge of the second trim part and an inner edge of the first trim part surrounding and defining the opening in the first trim part, the additional

step following the step of allowing the buffer material to mechanically connect to the first trim part.